



PATHWAYS TO LIBERATION:
*Illinoisans Share Policies to
Inform a Black Agenda*

ILLINOIS BLACK ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

VERSION 2 – 01.13.23



INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative (IBAI) is a Black-led and Black-focused, statewide, advocacy organization focused on the resilience and self-determination of Black Illinoisans. Recognizing the roles that anti-Blackness and systemic oppression has on Black lives, IBAI applies a bold, progressive, race-forward focus to its advocacy. IBAI believes that Illinois will be a socially and economically stronger state when policies and practices are established that enable thriving Black communities.

Setting the Context

Anti-Black racism in both practice and policy continues to be a threat to Black Illinoisans. It serves as a barrier to our well-being, and interrupts our ability to be the architects of our lives and communities. State and local policies and practices serve to disenfranchise us and serve as barriers to our ability to care and provide for ourselves and our families and to live full and abundant lives. Despite this, Black people have been instrumental in making Illinois the vibrant state that it is today.

History has taught us that race-neutral advocacy and policymaking will not end systemic oppression and the injustices Black people experience. In order to disrupt anti-Blackness and systemic oppression, we must center Black-led and Black-centered power-building groups and individuals, who are organizing and advocating for Black lives and liberation. For this reason, Black-led and explicitly Black-centered organizations are the core influencers and architects of IBAI's advocacy. These organizations have deep roots in their communities. They are insightful strategists and experts in not only the Black experience, but also the policies and practices that drive the poor life outcomes in Black communities. Unfortunately, these organizations and leaders are often the least invested in and their expertise is undervalued. Seeking to disrupt this status quo, IBAI recognizes these organizations and their work, and joins their efforts to build local power.



PURPOSE

It is the season of opportunities. Largely due to organizing and advocacy, Illinois' elected officials and state and local agency leaders have made great strides to develop and implement policies that begin to diminish the harms caused by anti-Blackness and systemic oppression. There is, however, more work to do. Throughout Illinois, at all levels of government, there are newly elected and reelected officials planning their first 100 days; advocacy organizations are developing their policy platforms and work plans; and philanthropic organizations are refining their funding priorities for the upcoming year. Now is the time to either double-down on the existing commitments made to Black communities and to Black-serving organizations or to step up and commit to supporting Black communities and Black-serving organizations. Black Illinoisans deserve and demand thoughtful, visionary policies that address the issues most important to us and the autonomy to develop and lead the strategies necessary to win and implement those policies. This anthology is intended to be an advocacy roadmap for community members, policymakers, and thought leaders, and seeks to inspire elected officials to advance legislation that represents the interests of Black people.



PROCESS

In August, IBAI convened a statewide group of Black advocacy leaders whose organizations are explicitly focused on Black people and communities. At the convening each leader had the opportunity to share their organization's priority campaigns and discuss their importance to Black Illinoisans statewide. After robust discussions, each organization voted for the 5 campaigns that they believed should be prioritized in this document. The 5 featured campaigns are what these Black advocates have determined to be priority issues for their communities.

¹ Blackroots Alliance, Chicago Urban League, First Followers, LiveFree Illinois, Kids First Chicago, and P.O.W.R. Beyond the Wall, the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, Chicago Southside Birth Collective, and Holistic Birth Collective participated in the creation of this document but were unable to attend the convening.

² The participants in this anthology do not represent all Black-led and Black-focused organizations in Illinois. There are many other organizations throughout Illinois doing critical work for and on behalf of Black communities.



CAMPAIGN 1:

Addressing Gun Violence H3 Coalition

First Followers in Champaign County is a peer mentorship reentry program for people impacted by the criminal legal system. Founded in 2015 as a drop-in center that provided services for those returning home, First Followers has expanded to offer employment support, workforce development for emerging adults, family reunification, referrals to services, transitional housing, support groups for individuals impacted by violence and incarceration, violence prevention efforts, and advocacy for the rights of those with criminal convictions.

Alarming Rise in Gun Violence

As two major hubs of the county, Champaign and Urbana are home to a majority of Champaign county's Black population. The poverty rate in these cities is more than double the poverty rate in the state of Illinois. They are also where the county's gun violence is most intensely concentrated. Both Champaign and Urbana saw record highs in 2021 for shooting incidents and shooting deaths. In 2021, Champaign-Urbana had the second-most firearm-related deaths when compared with nearly 50 U.S. cities of similar size; Champaign alone saw a 159% increase in shooting incidents from 2019 to 2021. Gun violence victims here are most frequently Black males.


The Harm, Healing, Home (H3) Coalition, a partnership between 12 organizations, has been advocating tirelessly to build support for a more coordinated approach to both prevent and address the after-effects of violence among individuals, families, and communities who have experienced violence. By providing peer mentorship and guidance, access to resources and services, and hope to those impacted by violence and incarceration, H3 partners believe that strong and peaceful communities are possible. Over the past year, the Coalition has garnered strong support with various members of the Champaign and Urbana City Councils, the County Board, and various faith-based and student-led organizations in the area.

Building a Continuum of Care

The H3 Coalition continues to mobilize power and resources across their membership in order to create a network of comprehensive and intentional care that meets the needs of those whose lives have been impacted by violence and incarceration. On September 24, 2022, the Coalition officially launched their vision to provide a continuum of services, including peer counseling and support for those directly impacted, and training for owners of small Black-owned businesses. H3 is developing plans for a community center to bring all of the services offered by member organizations to break down silos and access and build power across the community.

Grassroots power requires strength in numbers. Community members must collectively persuade elected officials at the city and county level to engage with those who have been directly impacted by interpersonal and community violence. Urge public figures (including leaders of impactful organizations) to embrace a paradigm shift - a narrative change that directs resources to the root of the issues surrounding the issue.

Center prevention and healing, not policing. Those closest to the problem are closest to the solutions. They should not be farthest from the resources dedicated to make those ideas a reality. Policing-based solutions to violence take resources away from impacted families and individuals, and it does not provide the healing they are requesting from trusted leaders in the community. Join H3 in their continued call for 10% of COVID relief money to be allocated toward violence prevention work in Champaign County. Support H3's advocacy and vision by visiting h3harmhealinghope.com.



CAMPAIGN 2: ***Fully Fund K-12 Education***

Since 2004, Kids First Chicago (originally the Renaissance Schools Fund) has worked to improve outcomes for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students. Though the district has since achieved dramatic growth in graduation rates, college readiness scores, and elementary reading and math scores, K1C remains focused on addressing inequitable outcomes and access to high-quality education for low-income communities with predominantly African American and Latinx/a/o families. K1C centers parents as they activate their voices and engage with the district, believing that “those closest to our students...are best equipped to design policies and systems that will improve equity and lead to stronger outcomes for our students, our communities, and our city.”

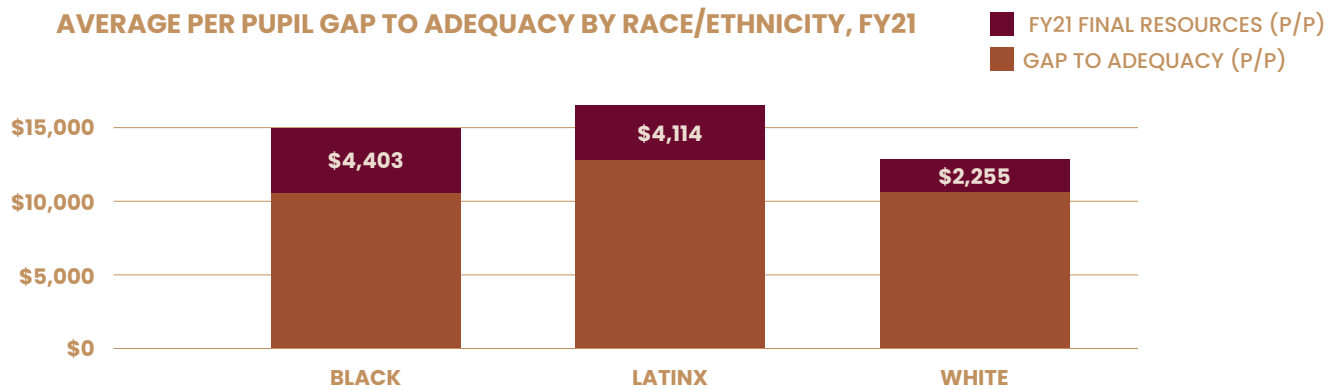
Fully Fund All K-12 schools in Illinois

In 2017, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act (EBF) to establish a funding system that ensures every school in the state has the capacity to meet the educational and social-emotional needs of all children it serves. The General Assembly pledged the necessary funds to get all K-12 school districts to at least 90% of full funding within 10 years of EBF’s enactment.

Education funding gaps affect all parts of the state—all but three counties in Illinois include at least one school district that is currently below 90% of full funding, and more than half of Illinois students are still in school districts below 70% of full funding. But at the current rate of investment, fully funding all K-12 school districts will not happen until, at best, 2043. This means generations of Illinois children will continue to receive an inadequately funded education at a time when education matters more than ever.

Disproportionate Disadvantages

These disparities in funding dramatically disadvantaged Black and Latinx students, who are disproportionately in school districts serving the greatest concentration of students from low-income households and the most property-poor districts. In Illinois, 80% of Black students and 72% of Latinx students live in districts serving a majority of students from low-income households, compared to 27% of White students. And on average, Black and Latinx students face a gap to full funding of about \$4,400 per pupil and \$4,100 per pupil respectively, compared to a gap of roughly \$2,250 per pupil for White students.




Kids First Chicago and the parents who guide their work urge the governor and state lawmakers to take the following actions that will increase annual EBF appropriations to equitably enhance student achievement for Illinois students:

Appropriate new state funding through the Evidence-Based Funding formula each year. To meet the statutory deadline of fully funding the EBF by FY 2027 and ensure that students' educational opportunities and outcomes are no longer dependent on their zip code, Illinois should increase K-12 funding at least \$550 million each year starting in the 2022-2023 school year.

Alter the funding formula to take into account student-level characteristics. Accounting for student body characteristics like race, concentrated poverty, and trauma could accelerate the distribution of new funding to school districts with a higher-proportion of Black and Latinx students, thereby helping those districts reach full funding adequacy more rapidly than under the current EBF model.

For more information on the Fully Funding K-12 campaign, please visit kidsfirstchicago.org or contact Hal Woods (hwoods@kidsfirstchicago.org).



CAMPAIGN 3: ***Support Foster*** ***System-Involved Parents***

Parents Overcoming Welfare-system Regulation(s) is an advocacy space for parents who have come into contact with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). P.O.W.R. fights to keep families intact so that they can be “together, safe, honored, supported, and thriving in their communities.” The organization focuses on the demographic groups most disproportionately impacted: Black and Indigenous families and families experiencing poverty. The group also advocates for resource allocation to Illinois families, and for parents with lived experiences with the foster system to be centered in policy and decision-making conversations.

Disproportionate Contact with Illinois DCFS

When DCFS gets a call about suspected child abuse or neglect, the agency may choose to send DCFS personnel to a family’s home to investigate the allegations. DCFS has the discretion to immediately remove a child or children at the start of the investigative phase.

Removals are known to cause harm to both the child and the family members from whom they are separated. Removals of children by state agencies affect families across demographic groups, yet in 43 states and Washington D.C., Black children are disproportionately impacted and experiencing the harms of family separation.³ By age 18, 53% of Black children will have been involved in a Child Protective Services investigation.⁴ In Illinois, Black youth represent 41% of DCFS cases, despite only comprising 15% of the total Illinois population.⁵ And while nearly all states reduced the number of children they brought into the foster system between 2019 and 2020, Illinois hit a 20-year high when it increased system entries by 17%.⁶

³Puzzanchera, C., Taylor, M., Kang, W. and Smith, J. (2022). Disproportionality Rates for Children of Color in Foster Care Dashboard. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

⁴ Kim, H., Widleman, C., Jonson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), 274-280.

⁵National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (2020). Dataset #255, AFCARS Foster Care FY2020. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states>

This trend is especially troubling given that DCFS-involved youth are much more likely than their peers to experience challenges accessing secure housing, reaching economic and job stability and educational attainment. They are also more likely to have mental health and substance use disorders and be involved in the justice system.

Fund Parent Advocates to Support Families during DCFS Investigations

Across the country, various parent-centered legal clinics and public defender offices have used interdisciplinary models that integrate legal, social work, and peer parent advocates into a unified response team during DCFS investigations. These multidisciplinary approaches are associated with a higher rate of case dismissals at adjudication and initial hearings (which sometimes occur prior to family separation) and, in the instance of child removals, significantly faster family reunification.⁷ Parents represented by an interdisciplinary team were 17% more likely to have their children home within 1 month and 43% more likely to be reunited with their children within the first year; on average, children of these parents were in the foster system nearly 4 months fewer.⁸ Peer parent advocates with lived expertise are a necessary part of this equation, as their involvement increases parent engagement and trust, bridges power imbalances with other decision makers in the process, and results in a higher reunification rate—an outcome that was particularly prevalent in participating Black families.⁹

P.O.W.R. believes that parents with lived expertise can be a critical part of the solution, and that they must be at the table with families as soon as they are navigating a process with DCFS. Parent advocates can also provide information about and access to resources that address concerns outlined in reports made to DCFS.

- **Develop a parent advocacy initiative housed under public defender offices.** Parent advocates can work in conjunction with legal and social services teams who are appointed to support families involved with DCFS, at the start of a family's interactions with the agency. A "pre-petition" model in particular would allow for a multidisciplinary team of legal practitioners, social service providers, and peer parent advocates to work together with a family as soon as they come to the attention of DCFS, rather than after separation and court involvement are under way.

⁶ Ibid.; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), FY 2012-2021. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/trends-foster-care-adoption>

⁷ Summers, A., Gatowski, S.I., Guellera, M. (2017). Examining hearing quality in child abuse and neglect cases: The relationship between breadth of discussion and case outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 82, 490-498.

⁸ Gerber, L.A., Pang, Y.C., Ross, T., Guggenheim, M, Pecora, P.J., Miller, J. (2019). Effects of an interdisciplinary approach to parental representation in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 102, 42-55. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.04.022

⁹ Cocks, J. (2021). Peer Parent and Family Advocacy in Child Protection: A pathway to better outcomes for kids. https://policy-futures.centre.uq.edu.au/files/7662/PolicyFutures2021_Cocks.pdf; Family Justice Initiative. (2022). Attribute 2: Interdisciplinary Practice Model. [PDF] <https://familyjusticeinitiative.org/model/high-quality-representation/>; Hines, A.M., Lee, P.A., Osterling, K.L. et al. (2007).

Factors Predicting Family Reunification for African American, Latino, Asian and White Families in the Child Welfare System. *J Child Fam Stud* 16, 275-289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-006-9085-2>; Saeterun, E.R., Wu, Q., Vasiliou, N., Mabingani, D., Krysik, J. (2022). Peer parent programs in child welfare: A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 129.

- **Fund family preservation, not family separation.** Families that are investigated, forcibly separated, and/or experiencing the termination of parental rights are often from communities that have been the victims of historical disinvestment. Funding, even that which is intended to prevent system involvement, is often directed into the system and government-affiliated organizations rather than to the communities impacted by family surveillance. We must redirect resources away from the state systems that police, monitor, and punish Black families toward resource access that prevents state intervention over racially disproportionate allegations of abuse or neglect. Funders who instead invest in community-led solutions (beyond the agencies and organizations that comprise the child “welfare” system) can have a major impact on preserving Black families and preventing intergenerational disruptions before they happen.

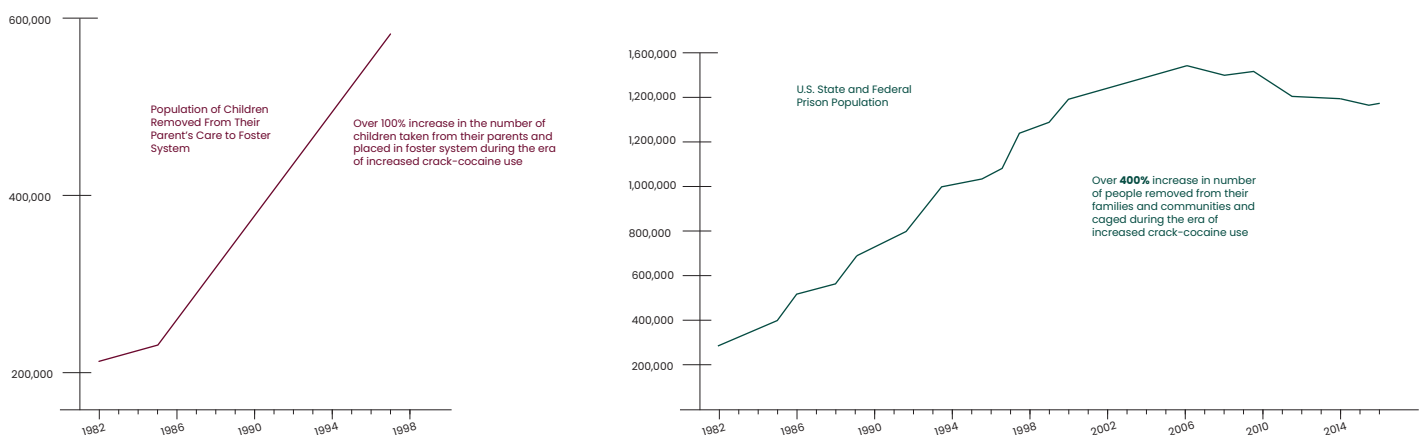
To learn about P.O.W.R.’s work and connect with members in support of the parent advocacy campaign, please visit powr-il.org.

CAMPAIGN 4: *Cannabis Equity*

The Chicago Urban League (CUL) works to achieve equity for Black families and communities through social and economic empowerment. Since 1916, the Chicago Urban League has helped people find jobs, secure affordable housing, enhance their educational experiences, and grow their businesses. One of the oldest and largest affiliates of the National Urban League, CUL promotes strong, sustainable communities through advocacy, innovation, and collaborative community, corporate and civic relationships.

The War on Drugs Persists

The War on Drugs (WOD) was a global effort to stop the creation and distribution of drugs like cannabis. Within the United States, Black communities were ravished by WOD legislation, family separation, and policing. The WOD led to the mass incarceration of Black people and family separation through the child “protection” system in Illinois.¹⁰



¹⁰ Movement for Family Power, NYU Law Family Defense Clinic, and The Drug Policy Alliance, “How the Foster System Has Become Ground Zero for the U.S. Drug War,” June 2020, accessed November 30, 2022.

Not only did the WOD fail to stop the flow of cannabis and other drugs through and into the United States, but this war exacted enormous costs upon Black communities.¹¹ Now, the cannabis industry continues this practice of anti-Black discrimination, as 70% of top cannabis industry executives are white men¹².

The Problem with Cannabis Policies

Thanks to Black advocates and Black-led organizations, like Equity and Transformation and Chicago NORML, Illinois has equitable cannabis policies, but the implementation of these policies has been challenging.¹³ Legalization and the Illinois Cannabis Social-Equity Program was one attempt to address inequalities. Legalization has permitted people who aren't impacted by the system to enjoy access to cannabis, while Black people impacted by the criminal legal and child welfare systems are continuously experiencing oppression inherited from the WOD.

To legally sell cannabis, Illinois charges \$25,000 to apply for the cultivation licensing fee, and those who are successful in obtaining the license must then pay an annual fee of \$100,000.¹⁴ Moreover, local sellers who have received a felony for selling more than 10 grams of cannabis are barred from participation in the cannabis industry.¹⁵ These convictions punish people by creating barriers that are separate from their arrest or sentence and bar people with a felony from selling cannabis access to the industry. Currently there is only one predominantly Black-owned licensed pot business and craft grower in Illinois and only one Black owned cannabis company in Illinois¹⁶, yet 4 of the largest 10 cannabis companies in the country are based in Illinois. Existing operators of multi state companies, none of whom are led by Black people or system-impacted communities, are taking the lead as new Black entrepreneurs are left behind.

The cannabis industry must be accessible to Black people

With legalization of cannabis, companies, almost entirely owned by white men, have quickly ballooned, while Black people have been largely entirely from the industry—both as cannabis business owners and as suppliers to the industry. Currently, many multistate operators do not document diversity spending in what is now a multi-billion dollar industry in Illinois. Very little has been done to make the cannabis industry more equitable, even for Black people who would like to work in dispensaries. In Chicago, many dispensaries are located in predominantly white neighborhoods instead of Black ones, making it harder for Black people to access these products.¹⁷ Equitable solutions to these industry problems are needed in order to give equal access to Black people wanting to join the industry.

¹¹Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts et al., “Reducing Barriers to Recovery: Shifting Low-Level Drug Possession From Felonies to Misdemeanors in Illinois,” October 31, 2022, accessed November 30, 2022, <https://www.drugpolicyreformillinois.org/report>.

¹² Jeremy Berke and Yeji Jesse Lee “Top executives at the 14 largest cannabis companies are overwhelmingly white men, an Insider analysis shows” Business Insider, Jun 30, 2021 <https://www.businessinsider.co>

¹³ “Andre d. Pond Cummings, & Steven A. Ramirez, The Illinois Cannabis Social-Equity Program: Toward a Socially Just Peace in the War on Drugs?, 53 Loy. U. Chi. L. J. 793 (2022). <https://lawcommons.luc.edu/lucli/vol53/iss4/6>

¹⁴ Noelle Skodzinski, Your State-by-State Guide to Cannabis Cultivation Business Application and Licensing Fees, Cannabis Bus. Times (Feb. 28, 2019), <https://bit.ly/36en8EW>.

¹⁵ NORML and The NORML Foundation “Illinois Laws and Penalties” <https://norml.org/laws/illinois-penalties/#:-:text=Selling%20or%20possessing%20with%20the,a%20maximum%20of%20%241%2C500.> (2022)

¹⁶ Robert McCoppin “Illinois’ 1st predominantly Black-owned licensed pot business and craft grower opens in Rockford; hundreds more licensees still trying to get started” Chicago Tribune October 03 2022 <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-rockford-craft-cannabis-grower-20221004-yviy5bcm25gx3fdiy4cb52sg-story.html>

¹⁷ City Of Chicago “Dispensary Locations” <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/cannabis-information-center/home/dispensary-locations.html>

Addressing inequity

The only solution to cannabis inequality is the fearless pursuit of cannabis equity and social justice through state regulation in Illinois. This means amending existing legislation by requiring those in the industry to do business with diverse groups, specifically systems-impacted communities. The Chicago Urban League sees legalization as a pathway to present Black people with the opportunity to pursue greater economic empowerment. It is imperative to ensure that Black residents, who are the most harmed by the War on Drugs, receive access to the industry through contracting, procurement and supply chain opportunities.

We Demand Justice

- a. **Full Expungement of all cannabis related arrests & convictions and the end War on Drug policies** that disproportionately punish Black people and people in systems impacted communities. Punishment must end after the conviction. No one should be denied employment, housing or education opportunities for selling or possessing cannabis
- b. **Business Representation** for new cannabis entrepreneurs and opportunities for current and up-and-coming Black-owned and operated cannabis companies.
- c. **Social Equity** for the Black residents most harmed by the War on Drugs so they are able to receive access to the industry through contracting, procurement and supply chain opportunities.

To support the Chicago Urban League as they advocate for equity in the Illinois cannabis industry, please visit chiul.org.¹⁸

¹⁸The Cannabis Equity Coalition (CEC) is also fighting for Cannabis Equity in Illinois. The CEC was founded in 2019 after town hall meetings in Chicago's south side. Community members recognized the need to take action to ensure their needs were met during and after legalization. The Coalition is a grassroots nonprofit that advances equity in Illinois by elevating community voices and collaborating with partners to create change in the cannabis industry through their pillars on business, community, and legislative policy. cannabisequityil.org

CEC is a grassroots non-profit that is fighting to ensure that the legalization of cannabis in Illinois is done to repair and reinvest in the communities most impacted by the War on Drugs, and to ensure the cannabis industry prioritizes people over profits.



CAMPAIGN 5: ***Reparations for African Descendants of Slavery***

BlackRoots Alliance (BA) is a Black-led organization working to support the safety and liberation of all Black people, including efforts to build socioeconomic power, heal our communities and fundamentally transform our society. All of BA's member organizations are led by people who have been directly impacted by issues of systemic racism and are on-the-ground leaders for a variety of racial justice issues.

Making Reparations a Reality

BA began its reparations campaign in 2021 by invoking community imagination around reparations and transformation, their aim is to build social, economic, and racial justice and fundamentally transform our society. Racial inequality has persisted as long as paths to reparations have been avoided. The harm began with chattel slavery and continues through systemic anti-Blackness. These systems created the War on Drugs and the War on Poverty which have been devastating to Black communities. Due to the sheer amount of economic disparities, Illinois was ranked the worst state for Black economic inequality in the US by WalletHub and it has a racial employment gap that doubles the US Average.¹⁹ It's time for Illinois, and the United States, to forge new paths toward reparations for ALL Black people, to support the Black communities that are standing in the shoes of their ancestors, existing at the intersections of multiple racialized harms. A strong definition of reparations is: "A process of repairing, healing, and restoring a people injured because of their group identity and in violation of their fundamental human rights by governments, corporations, institutions, and families," according to N'COBRA. Given this, reparations must include different options that allow for self-determination within communities impacted by systems of anti-Blackness.

¹⁹ Adam Cann "State Economies with the Most Racial Equality" WalletHub June (2022)
<https://wallethub.com/edu/state-economies-with-most-racial-equality/75810>

²⁰ [Legacy Site | Ncobra \(officialncobraonline.org\)](https://www.ncobra.org/)

The United States has paid reparations to “people injured because of their group identity” before. The government has paid reparations to Japanese-American families who were interned during World War II, to Americans held hostage in Iran, to families who lost loved ones during the Sept. 11 attacks, and most egregiously, to enslavers in the Transatlantic Slave Trade to reimburse them for their lost “property” post-emancipation.²¹ The United States government has also supported reparations for Holocaust survivors who settled in the US from France, in a program that was “the first World War II reparations program to include heirs considered to be “standing in the shoes” of people who died before receiving compensation for the atrocities they or their spouses endured”, according to State Department officials.²² Locally communities have responded to specific reparative needs, such as Evanston’s housing reparations program derived from cannabis sales tax and The Chicago torture justice ordinance.

BA canvassed over one hundred community members about reparations, hosted community conversations (small group meetings) about reparations, and is launching the [Ancestral Reparations Healing Cohort](#), which is an experience of transgenerational healing and future world making. This cohort will support grassroots individuals in researching their family history, since the conversation of reparations will include “who” is qualified to receive reparations, some attention is being paid to the fact that many Black Americans cannot trace their lineage back beyond a couple of generations. As we work to make the case for reparations, it is important for us to support people as they unpack their lineage and discover more about where and from whom they have come. In order to heal ourselves and create a healed system, we have to work on healing generational trauma. This project creates an opportunity to those interested in delving into their family history and creating an artistic representation of what reparations could mean through a healing justice lens.

It is time to change the conversation. Instead of asking what is reparations, why it’s deserved, and who will receive it, we’re asking when it will happen, where it will happen and how to effectively implement. BA is engaging communities both in person and virtually to bring their voices and perspectives into the conversation, and asking them what they think. This allows community imagination to be uplifted. The policy change for reparations must be as varied and applicable as the harms that have been caused. Therefore, we are supporting various partner organizations in their efforts.²³

BA initiated this campaign to shift the public narrative around the imperative of reparations and crowd-source community led solutions so when the legislation is crafted, it is done so with the community demands at the center.

To stay engaged with the work of Blackroots Alliance, please visit their website: blackrootsalliance.org and email gabby@blackrootsalliance.org.

²¹ [The United States Has Paid Reparations for a Host of Issues. Why not Slavery? - New York State Bar Association \(nysba.org\)](#)

²² [U.S. begins paying out reparations from France to Holocaust survivors and their heirs - The Washington Post](#)

²³ See Appendix

APPENDIX

Countless Black leaders, advocates, and community members are working to shape the policies and conditions that affect Black communities across Illinois. IBAI uplifts the efforts that center Black voices, leaders, and progress. Though we could not spotlight every campaign, below is introductory information on other critical Black-led and Black centered campaigns, and the organizations engaged in change-making across Illinois. We invite you to learn more about these campaigns and utilize the contact information provided to support causes that align with you.

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation (SOUL)

Affirming Care for Transgender People in Cook County Jail (ACT CCJ)

Alongside other community partners supporting ACT CCJ, SOUL demands gender-affirming care for incarcerated individuals (specifically Black trans women) at risk of targeted violence and harassment in Cook County Jail because of their racial and gender identities.

sharah@soulinchicago.org

Chicago South Side Birth Center

Birth, Wellness, and Abundance

Chicago South Side Birth Center is a non-profit startup that will be an independent, Black midwife-led, not-for-profit Birth Center located on the South Side of Chicago. We aim to offer a low risk option for birth and mixed risk option for reproductive health care for people in their own neighborhood and community. We hope to be an answer to the lack of care options currently available on the Southside as well as a solution to the disparate maternal and child health rates among Black birthing people and children on the South Side.

chicagosouthsidebirthcenter.org/

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Equity and Transformation (EAT)

Big Payback: Reparations for War on Drugs

EAT is leading the Illinois Reparations Coalition for the Big Payback Campaign. The racist policies of the War on Drugs have caused irreversible damage to communities of color. This campaign uplifts those harmed by the War on Drugs by actualizing reparations to survivors based on the United Nations' 5 pillars of reparations and the limited racial equity achievements through cannabis legalization. Ending cannabis prohibition cannot be discussed without realizing the reparations for the War on Drugs. So far, the campaign has canvassed hundreds of Chicago residents, held focus groups, educated communities, and drafted petitions to elected officials to commit to the fight on WoD by way of reparations.

eatchicago.org/campaigns-programs

Budget For Black Lives

SOUL in collaboration with allied organizations in the Budget for Black Lives Coalition are calling on the Cook County Board of Commissioners and President Toni Preckwinkle to invest more money in public services that promote community health and safety equitably across the County, especially in the Black communities most impacted by violence and incarceration. The Budget for Black Lives campaign simultaneously calls on the County Board to divest money from the racist and ineffective systems of policing and incarceration that have caused immense harm and failed to keep our communities safe.

Live Free Illinois (Chicago + Statewide)

End Mandatory Supervised Release

Under its decarceration pillar, Live Free Illinois is organizing to eliminate Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR), a form of continued incarceration and surveillance on formerly incarcerated people after they are released and return home.

livefreeillinois.org/decarceration

Kids First Chicago (Chicago)

Fair Racial Representation for Chicago's Elected School Board

KiC urges members of the public to demand from the Illinois General Assembly that districts for the newly-legislated elected Chicago Board of Education be drawn in a way that allows Black and Latino candidates to be competitive, thus more closely reflecting CPS's demographics.

<https://guide.kidsfirstchicago.org/cps-school-board>

Live Free Illinois (Chicago + Statewide)

Fund Gun Violence Prevention

Live Free Illinois has proposed a City of Chicago ordinance (currently in the Public Safety Committee) to establish and fund a permanent Office of Gun Violence. The office would develop a comprehensive community-led plan to address violence and trauma, create accountability for progress, and provide resources to communities affected by gun violence.

livefreeillinois.org/office-of-gun-violence-prevention

Beyond the Walls Movement

Get Out the Vote

Beyond the Walls mobilizes Black residents in Southern Illinois who are registered to or eligible to vote, particularly those who are directly impacted by the criminal legal system, to increase the region's Black voter turnout.

btwthemovementnfp.org

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Grow Greater Englewood

Holistic and Community Driven Transformation of Englewood

Grow Greater Englewood is working to repair the harms caused by systemic disinvestment in the predominantly Black community of Englewood. ECL) and Englewood Community Public Benefits Compact exist as a platform for Englewood residents to directly shape equitable development in their neighborhood through collective stewardship of land. This initiative repairs the harms of anti-Blackness related to racial redlining in housing, access to land, and the self-determination of Black communities.

Chicago Urban League (Chicago)

Home Appraisal Equity

Home ownership is a primary way for individuals and families to amass as well as pass on generational wealth, yet the appraisal process can be a barrier. Chicago Urban League is developing a training program to engage more people of color in the appraisal industry, as well as advocating for more structured sponsorship and trainee protocol through the State's professional regulation of appraisers.

thechicagourbanleague.org/program/housing

Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA)

Implementing Source of Income protections

CAFHA worked with the Illinois Coalition for Fair Housing to successfully advocate for HB 2775. Effective January 1, 2023, the law will ensure that renters are no longer turned away from available housing simply because of their source of income. These new protections will create greater access to housing for Illinoisans including 99,000+ Housing Choice Voucher participants; individuals using Social Security Income and/or disability-specific accounts to pay for rent; single mothers using child support, alimony payments or other types of non-wage funds to pay for housing; and veterans who use a Veterans Administration subsidy to pay for housing.

housingchoicepartners.org/soi-campaign

Parents Overcoming Welfare-system Regulation(s) (Statewide)

Poverty is not Neglect

Families with low income interact with DCFS at higher rates than their peers - because of both their frequent interactions with professions mandated to report to DCFS and their lack of access to resources which is often conflated with child neglect. Almost two-thirds of removals in Black families are due to neglect allegations like inadequate food, shelter, supervision, or child care. Poor and working families deserve support as well as conditions that allow them to thrive and remain together in their communities, rather than accused and separated.

powr-il.org

Holistic Birth Collective

Reproductive Liberty and Justice Act

The Reproductive Liberty and Justice Act (RLJA) focuses on reducing racial and geographic inequities that currently preclude segments of the Illinois population from autonomously exercising the fundamental rights and liberties provided by the Reproductive Health Act. They provide patients with secure and confidential care by providers and correct deficiencies in the implementation of Public Act 93-578. In addition, they ensure that the increasing number of patients traveling to Illinois from out-of-state for legal abortion care do not compound inequities in the availability of and access to maternity care among childbearing families who reside in Illinois. RLJA also repeals the War on Drugs policy that defines prenatal substance use as prima facie evidence of child neglect. This racialized policy has proven ineffective in promoting maternal-infant health and has caused disproportionate harm to Black families in Illinois.

Holisticbirthcollective.org

Blackroots Alliance

Safe & Thriving Communities

Blackroots Alliance's Safe & Thriving Communities campaign is currently being developed in partnership with the Black Public Defender Association (BPDA) and the Illinois Justice Project (ILJP), with the goal of developing a community-led strategic plan for safe and thriving communities, building bridges between criminal legal system advocates, grassroots community members, and directly impacted individuals.

blackrootsalliance.org

United African Organization

Support For Black Asylum Seekers

The United African Organization (UAO) is a coalition of African community-based organizations that promote social and economic justice, civic participation and empowerment of Black immigrants and refugees in Illinois. UAO is supporting Black asylum seekers coming through the US-Mexico border by ensuring that they have equitable access to available state and local resources. Black immigrants are often not included in conversations about migration and are, therefore, often underserved. Equitable access to resources and support for Black immigrants is an important piece of the fight for racial equity.

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation (SOUL)

Water4All

The Water4All Coalition developed and advocated for a Chicago ordinance to provide safe and affordable access to water for all Chicagoans. Water4all demands safe, affordable, and lead free pipes in Chicago, as well as addressing water access and affordability. In Chicago, low-income and working class Black and Brown communities face the disproportionate impact of increasing water rates, shut-offs, and penalties and fines from the Department of Water Management. Water4all looks to fight for racial justice at the intersection of environmental justice.

www.soulinchicago.org/

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Black Lives Matter Chicago

Whips n Dreams

The Whips n Dreams campaign demands for revenue generated from transit fines to be returned to the communities to support the infrastructure and other needs of the communities. When successful, this will ease economic insecurity where it intersects with transit issues: traffic tickets, red light and speed cameras, parking tickets and car boots, impound citations, and other economic penalties disproportionately distributed in Black communities. Whips n Dreams aims to amend or eradicate policies establishing such citations and denounces transit surveillance cameras that target Black and Brown communities.

blacklivesmatterchicago.com

Anthology Endorsers

Beyond the Walls Movement

btwthemovementnfp.org

Blackroots Alliance

blackrootsalliance.org

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Black Lives Matter Chicago

blacklivesmatterchicago.com

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Equity and Transformation (EAT)

eatchicago.org/campaigns-programs

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Grow Greater Englewood

Blackroots Alliance Network Member: Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation (SOUL)

www.soulinchicago.org/

Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA)

housingchoicepartners.org/soi-campaign

Chicago South Side Birth Center

Chicago Urban League (Chicago)

thechicagourbanleague.org/program/housing

Holistic Birth Collective

Holisticbirthcollective.org

Kids First Chicago (Chicago)

<https://guide.kidsfirstchicago.org/cps-school-board>

Live Free Illinois (Chicago + Statewide)

livefreeillinois.org/office-of-gun-violence-prevention

Parents Overcoming Welfare-system Regulation(s) (Statewide)

powr-il.org

CONCLUSION

IBAI fights for Black communities, and the organizations centering our communities, to envision and build self-determined futures. These organizations have developed bold campaigns that create opportunities to support and embolden Black communities. They are working on a range of critical issues impacting Black communities from reproductive justice to education and mass incarceration. These campaigns serve as a springboard for the creation of a collective organizing and policy advocacy agenda that centers Black lives. Because this document does not represent a comprehensive list of organizing and advocacy opportunities, we recognize that there is still opportunity to expand and add campaigns. As such, IBAI invites Black leaders working to create more abundant Black communities to join our ecosystem by reaching out to info@ilblackadvocacy.org.

As IBAI grows and develops, we hope to further amplify the work of these campaigns, and others, by building advocacy and organizing momentum around unified Black policy agendas. Follow us at <https://www.ilblackadvocacy.org/anthology2022> for updates.

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